# The Hazards of Zeal

THOMAS S. SZASZ

Wilson's personality and Presidency have always been and still are a delicate subject. Inevitably, any critical biography of an American President, whether the author so intends or not, is considered an exposé of his secret weaknesses. This effect is greatly heightened when, as here, the subject is a great and "martyred" President, and one of the biographers, a great but still controversial psychiatrist. This book, then, is sure to make the fur fly.

Because of the criticisms already leveled against it on the grounds that it impugns Wilson's greatness by demeaning him as mentally deranged, I shall first address myself to the psychiatric aspects of the work. Freud, it must be noted, foresaw this criticism. "We must attack the misconception," he writes in the Introduction, "that we have written this book with a secret purpose to prove that Wilson was a pathological character, an abnormal man, in order to undermine in this roundabout way esteem for his achievements. No! That is not our intention. For belief in a stiff frame of normality and a sharp line of demarcation between normal and abnormal in the psychic life has been abandoned by our science." This claim of Freud's bears the same relation to the realities of psychiatry as Wilson's claims about the Treaty of Versailles bore to the realities of politics. The fact is that millions of persons all over the world have been defamed and imprisoned by having been declared "mentally ill"; but Freud never even alludes to any of this. Similarly, in a speech on September 24, 1919, Wilson characterized the Treaty of Versailles as "the most remarkable document . . . in human history," and asserted that the Great Powers "did not claim a single piece of territory"; the facts were blatantly otherwise.

*Wilson: ". . . evangel of therapeutic politics"*

FREUD'S DISCLAIMER, that he was not trying to prove that Wilson was a "pathological character," is contradicted by what he and Bullitt actually say about Wilson. For example, they cite Wilson's false characterization of the Treaty of Versailles and conclude that Wilson was "not consciously lying," but was "very close to psychosis." The authors thus use psychiatric diagnostic terms, as do others, to explain behavior which they dislike or disapprove of, and thereby stigmatize the person whom they label. Herein lies one of the valuable lessons contained in this volume. If the reader believes that mental illness is a disease like any other, then he must be ready to accept the possibility that the experts capable of diagnosing such diseases may find them not only in unimportant people, but also in national leaders. Moreover, if psychiatric diagnoses demean great men, they also demean little men. How, then, do we reconcile crying "Foul!" when Wilson is diagnosed mentally sick, with practicing the same kind of name-calling with great fervor on our less important citizens?

As psychiatric analysis, this book thus exemplifies what has become a commonplace in our day: the substitution of the language of medicine for the language of morals, and the consequent condemnation of individuals as "sick" rather than as "bad." This perspective on human affairs suffers from a fundamental misunderstanding of the differences between physical science and (so-called) social science. In physical science, we desire knowledge of an object in order to control it better; by understanding electricity, we can produce light, heat and send messages. If social science is merely an extension, to man and society, of the aims and methods of physical science, then it follows that we will wish to have a greater understanding of people, the better to control them. But the control of man by his fellow man is supposed to be a problem for ethics, law and politics—not for "science." Moreover, although it is true that we must know physics to control electrons, it is not true that we must know psychology to control men: to control man, we need power, not knowledge, and the desire and will to use that power.

DESPITE these defects, this is a valuable book. To be sure, it is a personalistic, rather than a historical, analysis of Wilson and his Presidency; but that is what the authors intended it to be. It is possible to separate, to some extent, the portrait of Wilson here presented from the authors' "psychoanalysis" of his character; the former may stand even if the latter does not. The following quotations illustrate the sort of picture which Freud and Bullitt paint of Wilson. In his mature years, they say, Wilson was "an ugly, unhealthy, 'intense,'

*Thomas Woodrow Wilson: A Psychological Study*, by Sigmund Freud and William C. Bullitt. Houghton, $6.00

Presbyterian, who had little interest in women and none in food, wine, music, art or sport, but enormous interest in speaking, in himself, in his career and in God." At Princeton, when reminded of a promise he had made, Wilson retorted: "We must not lay too great stress on 'commitments.'" In Paris, he was said to be the man who "talks like Jesus Christ and acts like Lloyd George."

The picture of Wilson which thus emerges is consistent with that painted by others, notably by Thomas Bailey, a distinguished professor of American history at Stanford University, who characterizes him as follows: "He called for 'peace without victory' early in 1917 (he ultimately settled for victory without peace). After trying 'armed neutrality' (it was essentially unarmed unneutrality), he asked for a war to make the world 'safe for democracy' (it ended with the world made unsafe for democracy) and for 'a war to end war' (there were twenty or so wars being waged after the big one jarred to a halt). At Paris he fought desperately for his Fourteen Points, including 'open covenants for peace, openly arrived at' (he met secretly with the Big Four). . . ."

Undeniably, Wilson managed to entangle the United States in a war purely on economic conflicts between two groups of European powers, "right" and "wrong" being as evenly divided between the combatants as they have ever been in war; and he managed to superintend a peace treaty unwittingly guaranteed to breed discontents and wars the likes of which mankind had never seen. Bullitt, on the other hand, resigned in 1919 (when he was only 28 years old) from his position as attaché to the American Peace Commission, because, as he wrote to the President, "our government has consented now to deliver the suffering peoples of the world to new oppressions, subjections and dismemberments—a new century of war. And I can convince myself no longer that effective labor for 'a new world order' is possible as a servant of this Government . . . (The) duty of the Government of the United States to its own people and to mankind is to refuse to sign or ratify this unjust treaty, to refuse to guarantee its settlements by entering the League of Nations, to refuse to entangle the United States further by the understanding with France." Still, Wilson, not Bullitt, is honored as a great American and a great "peacemaker"; and Wilson, not Bullitt, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace.

Herein lies one of the crucial differences between science and politics. We revere Giordano Bruno, not those who burned him at the stake. We remember Ignaz Semmelweiss, not those who persecuted him and committed him to an insane asylum. But we do not similarly honor men, like Bullitt, who had courageously warned about and sagely predicted the consequences of Wilson's "therapeutic" politics—and who were proved right by future events as fully as any scientist predicting the motion of planets could hope to be. In human affairs we thus continue to focus on motives rather than consequences, and to honor lofty aims rather than decent deeds.

Freud, we may recall here, taught psychiatrists about the risks lurking in excessive therapeutic zeal. In this book, Freud and Bullitt show us the dangers lurking in the reforming zeal of the politician and statesman. If proof were needed that Samuel Johnson was right when he exclaimed, "Hell is paved with good intentions," this book would amply supply it.

Although written more than thirty years ago, this study of Wilson is

## Random Notes

• BOOKS: The flood of Civil War books seems, at last, to be subsiding, but publishers are already gearing up for the bicentennial of the American Revolution. Two interesting eyewitness items are *The Spirit of '76*, in which Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris assemble accounts from journals, letters, newspaper reports and other contemporary sources (Harper, $15) and *Boys in the Revolution*, containing the journals of three young soldiers (Stackpole, May, $4.50). . . . Noel Stock, Pound's amanuensis, offers interpretations in *Reading the Cantos* (Pantheon, June, $5). . . . One Gershom Bradford has an answer to the mystery of that ship that was found empty and adrift in the Atlantic in 1872. It's in *The Secret of the Mary Celeste and Other Sea Fare* (Barre, $5.95). . . . Newest volumes in the eminently worthwhile Sierra Club's equally worthwhile "Exhibit Series" ($25 each) are lavish picture trips to the *Navajo Wildlands*, Alaska's *Glacier Bay*, and *Kauai*, the jewel of the Hawaiian Islands.

Coming up from the indefatigable Edwin P. Hoyt is an illustrated biography, *Alexander Woollcott: The Man Who Came to Dinner* (Abelard-Schuman, Spring, $6.50). . . . Twenty years after, H. Allen Smith has written *Son of Rhubarb*, another crafty cat (Trident, May, $4.95). Silliness: Atheneum has published *Jiggery-Pokery: A Compendium of Double-Dactyls* ($3.95); Beacon will offer an illustrated history of ballooning in the nineteenth century, Munson Baldwin's *With Brass and Gas* (May, $6). . . . SUGGESTION: now available is *The Serviceman's New Testament*, with waterproof vinyl carrying case and in a ready-to-mail carton (Holman, $3.50).

• LITERARY NOTE: Ex-convict Frank Elli, author of the best-selling (and well worth reading) prison novel, *The Riot*, writes to his publishers, Coward-McCann: "I've been hanging around bookstores, in disguise, of course, and during one day I have personally counted seven cash sales and two thefts. Do I get my royalty on a book regardless of whether it is purchased or shoplifted?"

• WRITERS ON THE RIGHT: Two *NR* contributors grace the publishers' Spring lists: Nika Standen Hazelton, with *A Swiss Cookbook* (Atheneum, April, $5.95), and Ralph de Toledano, a revised edition of whose *Spies, Dupes and Diplomats*, story of the Hiss case, is just out (Arlington House, $5). . . . Coming up: F. Clifton White's *Suite 3505: The Story of the Draft Goldwater Movement* (Arlington, April, $6.95).

astonishingly timely today. One of the reasons for this is that Wilson was the first important meliorist liberal in modern American politics. His failure and tragedy were not just the failure and tragedy of a particular individual — as Freud and Bullitt make it appear—but also the failure and tragedy of evangelical liberalism as a psychological perspective and a political ideology. As Kenneth Minogue has so brilliantly shown, one of the hazards the liberal faces is that while he "is concerned with vague general ends, it is in fact the means which are crucial in society—for the simple reason that the ends are never reached. Especially where the end is vague and utopian, the politician will be particularly liable to misunderstand the actual implications of his work. How many visionaries have unwittingly prepared a Hell on earth because their gaze was stubbornly fixed on Heaven? And when Hell comes—well, there is always some *ad hoc* theory of sinister interests or Judas-like betrayal to extricate the theorist from his disaster. What his illusions have prevented him from understanding are the forces he in fact served; and good intentions are quite beside the point. Stupidity is a moral as well as an intellectual defect."

Wilson was the quintessence of the ascetic, self-sacrificing, salvationist liberal who denies his own desires and needs and claims to represent the interests and welfare not of his own person or nation, but of all mankind. Historians sympathetic to Wilson view his inability to impose this vision on others as a "tragedy." But should we not rather rejoice that men who seek to deceive others, even with the best of intentions, in the end only deceive themselves? So long as that remains true, there is hope for mankind.

# The Boys in Group II

WILLIAM A. RUSHER

By now it is no secret that Barry Goldwater was drafted, and largely nominated, by a group of men he did not know well and some of whom he may not even have liked very much. When he finally proclaimed his candidacy in January 1964, and still more when he took control of the machinery of the Republican Party after his nomination in July, Goldwater dismissed or demoted most of the members of Group I and replaced them with Group II —a combination of Arizona political intimates under Denison Kitchel (to do the "nuts and bolts" work of the campaign) and a conservative brain trust gathered around William Baroody (to do the speech-writing and heavy thinking). From Goldwater's nomination through Election Day, Group II was solidly in control of his campaign, and to it belong whatever bouquets are considered to be due for that performance. Comes now Karl Hess, one of Bill Baroody's boys, to collect a few of those bouquets and offer the first public account of It All as seen from that particular vantage point.

*In a Cause That Will Triumph*, by Karl Hess. Doubleday, $4.95

It is unfortunate that Hess feels obliged to spend a great deal of time taking pot-shots at various individual members of Group I. To be sure, he may justly point out that literary hostilities were opened by Stephen Shadegg, whose own book, *What Happened to Goldwater?* (*NR*, August 10, 1965), had harsh things to say about certain members of Hess's own circle. But Shadegg, as a longtime Arizona friend and campaign manager for Goldwater, stood to a large extent outside both groups, and his eclipse was in no way related to Goldwater's decision to send virtually the entire leadership of the Draft Goldwater Committee to the showers half-way through the big game.

Nonetheless, Hess snipes diligently away at Group II's fallen predecessors, and it is not a very pretty sight. They were, it seems, "pros"—a word Hess uses pejoratively, as implying a person with motives evil at worst and impure at best. (It may also interest Senator Goldwater, who once discounted them as rank amateurs.) It never once occurs to Hess that there may be something positively admirable about a group of professional politicians who cared enough for their country to spurn the waving checkbook of Nelson Rockefeller and deliver 450 delegate votes to a man who had warned them repeatedly that their attachment would not necessarily be reciprocated. Nor is Hess even prepared to be impressed by their political achievement. "The trick in 1964," he says contemptuously, "would have been to stop the convention from nominating Goldwater. Getting it to nominate him was about as complicated as getting water to flow downhill." No doubt—but how was such an enthusiastic convention assembled in the first place? In seeking to derogate that brilliant performance, Hess succeeds only in demonstrating his own profound ignorance of the complexities of American Presidential politics.

All this is especially unfortunate, I repeat, because when he finally gets around to the campaign itself, Hess has a lot that is new and interesting to say. He himself had worked on the party's 1960 platform and on its 1962 Declaration of Principles before taking a hand with the 1964 document, and he demonstrates convincingly that the outcries of the "moderates" about the latter were, quite simply, phony: it was the lineal descendant of its two unexceptionable predecessors. In a separate chapter entitled "The Bomb and the Card," he discusses calmly the campaign's two biggest canards: the successful distortion of Goldwater's views on nuclear weapons and again on Social Security. His descriptions of how the major decisions of the campaign were made are entitled to high respect, since after all he was there. My own favorite, however, is his chapter on the press, in which he pillories a performance that, God knows, badly needed pillorying.

There is, in addition, a lengthy appendix setting forth what purports to be a verbatim transcript of the "unity conference" held by the Republican leaders at Hershey, Pennsylvania on August 12, 1964. Practically everybody was there (Goldwater and Miller, Eisenhower and Nixon, plus Rocky, Romney, Percy, Scranton, Chafee, Volpe, Kitchel, Burch *et al*), and they obviously didn't realize posterity was listening. Especially recommended for students of political science!

Here and there one misses some-